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PHOENIX, ARIZONA.

A Story Of Truxton King By George Barr McCutcheon

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Truxton King, a millionaire's son, sets out in search of adventure. Where better could he look for stirring events than in faroff Graustark, where the age of chivalry yet survives in all its romantic opportunity; where rules Prince Robin, the most precocious boy monarch in the realm of fiction; where the reds of Europe plot his murder in mysterious underground retreats; where gallant Truxton King and brave "Uncle Jack" fight valiantly for the preservation of the prince and the love of beautiful princesses; where American pluck and manhood are pitted against foreign intriguers, and where honesty and courage are mightier than the sword? Read of Prince Robin, son of an American princess; of Olga Platanova, the girl with the dread mission; of Marlanx, the Iron Count; of John Tullis, the American bulwark of a foreign throne; of lovely Loraine and of daredevil Truxton King, and then you will understand why an American lad is Prince of Graustark and an American author prince of story tellers.

CHAPTER I. TRUXTON KING.

HE was a tall, rawboned, rangy young fellow with a face so tanned by wind and sun you had the impression that his skin would feel like leather if you could affect the impertinence to test it by the sense of touch. His clothes fitted him loosely and yet were graciously devoid of the bagginess which characterizes the appearance of extremely young men whose frames are not fully set and whose joints are still parading through the last stages of college development.

This tall young man in the panama hat and gray flannels was Truxton King, embryo globe trotter and searcher after the treasures of romance. Somewhere up near Central park, in one of the fashionable cross streets, was the home of his father and his father's father before him—a home which Truxton had not seen in two years or more. It is worthy of passing notice, and that is all, that his father was a manufacturer; more than that, he was something of a power in the financial world. His mother was not strictly a social queen in the great metropolis, but she was what we might safely call one of the first "ladies in waiting," which is quite good enough for the wife of a manufacturer, especially when one records that her husband was a manufacturer of steel. It is also a matter of no little consequence that Truxton's mother was more or less averse to the steel business as a heritage for her son. Be it understood here and now that

she intended Truxton for the diplomatic service.

But neither Truxton's father, who wanted him to be a manufacturing Croesus, nor Truxton's mother, who expected him to become a social Solomon, appears to have taken the young man's private inclinations into consideration. Young Mr. King believed in romance. He grew up with an ever increasing bump of imagination, contiguous to which, strange to relate, there was a properly developed bump of industry and application; hence it is not surprising that he was willing to go far afield in search of the things that seemed more or less worth while to a young gentleman who had suffered the ill fortune to be born in the nineteenth century instead of the seventeenth.

We come upon him at last—luckily for us we were not actually following him—after two years of wonderful but rather disillusioning adventure in mid-Asia and all Africa. He had seen the Congo and the Euphrates, the Ganges and the Nile, the Yangtsekang and the Yenisei; he had climbed mountains in Abyssinia, in Slam, in Tibet and Afghanistan; he had shot big game in more than one jungle and had been shot at by small brown men in more than one forest, to say nothing of the little encounters he had had in most unoccidental towns and cities.

For twenty days he had traveled by caravan across the Persian uplands, through Herat and Meshed and Bokhara, striking off with his guide alone toward the sea of Aral and the eastern shores of the Caspian, thence through the Ural foothills to the old Roman highway that led down into the sweet green valleys of a land he had thought of as nothing more than the creation of a harebrained fictionist.

Somewhere out in the shimmering east he had learned, to his honest amazement, that there was such a



"I'LL GIVE YOU A HUNDRED DOLLARS FOR IT."

land as Graustark. At first he would not believe, but the English bank in Meshed assured him that he would come to it if he traveled long enough and far enough into the north and west and if he were not afraid of the hardships that most men abhor. The dying spirit of romance flamed up in his heart. His blood grew quick again and eager. He would not go home until he had sought out this land of fair women and sweet tradition. And so he traversed the wild and dangerous Tartar roads for days and days, like the knights of Scheherazade in the times of old, and came at last to the gates of Edelweiss.

Not until he sat down to a rare dinner in the historic Hotel Regenetz was he able to realize that he was truly in that fabled, mythical land of Graustark, a quaint, grim little principality in the most secret pocket of the earth's great mantle. This was the land of his dreams, the land of his fancy. He had not even dared to hope that it actually existed.

And now it becomes my deplorable duty to divulge the fact that Truxton King, after two full days and nights

in the city of Edelweiss, was quite ready to pass on to other fields, completely disillusioned in his own mind and not a little disgusted with himself for having gone to the trouble to visit the place.

Where were the beautiful women he had read about and dreamed of ever since he left Teheran? On his soul, he had not seen half a dozen women in Edelweiss who were more than passably fair to look upon. True, he had to admit, the people he had seen were of the lower and middle classes—the shopkeepers and the shopgirls, the hucksters and the fruit vendors. What he wanted to know was this: What had become of the royalty and the nobility of Graustark? Where were the princes, the dukes and the barons, to say nothing of the feminine concomitants to these excellent gentlemen?

One dingy little shop in the square interested him. It was directly opposite the Royal Cafe, with American bars attached, and the contents of its grimy little window presented a peculiarly fascinating interest to him. They were packed with weapons and firearms of ancient design. Once he ventured inside the little shop. Flashed no attendant, he put aside his suddenly formed impulse to purchase a mighty broadsword.

On several occasions he had seen a grim, sharp featured old man in the doorway of the shop, but it was not until after he had missed the Thursday train that he made up his mind to accost him and to have the broadsword at any price. With this object in view, he inserted his tall frame into the narrow doorway, calling out lustily for attention.

"What is it?" demanded a sharp, angry voice at his elbow. He found himself looking into the wizened, parchment-like face of the little old man.

"That broad—say, you speak English, don't you?"

"Certainly," snapped the old man. "Why shouldn't I? I can't afford an interpreter. You'll find plenty of English used here in Edelweiss since the Americans and British came. They won't learn our language, so we must learn theirs."

"What's the price of that old sword you have in the window?"

"Three hundred gnyons."

"What's that in dollars?"

"Four hundred and twenty. It is genuine, sir, and 400 years old. Old Prince Boris carried it. It's most rare."

"I'll give you a hundred dollars for it, Mr.—er—he looked at the sign on the open door—"Mr. Spantz."

"I don't want your money. Good day."

Truxton King felt his chin in perplexity. "It's too much. I can't afford it," he said, disappointment in his eyes.

"I have modern blades of my own make, sir, much cheaper and quite as good," ventured the excellent Mr. Spantz.

"You make 'em?" in surprise.

The old man straightened his bent figure with sudden pride. "I am armorer to the crown, sir. My blades are used by the nobility—not by the army, I am happy to say."

"I say, Herr Spantz, or monsieur, I'd like to have a good long chat with you. What do you say to a mug of that excellent beer over in the cafe garden? Business seems to be a little dull. Can't you—er—look up?"

Spantz looked at him keenly.

"May I ask what brings you to Edelweiss?" he asked abruptly.

"I don't mind telling you, Mr. Spantz, that I'm here because I'm somewhat of a fool. False hopes led me astray. I came here looking for romance—for adventure."

"I see," cackled Spantz, his eyes twinkling with mirth. "You thought you could capture wild and beautiful princesses here just as you pleased, eh? Let me tell you, young man, only one American—only one foreigner, in fact—has accomplished that miracle. Mr. Lorry came here ten years ago and won the fairest flower Graustark ever produced—the beautiful Yette—but he was the only one."

"No. I'm not looking for princesses. I've seen hundreds of 'em in all parts of the world."

"You should see Prince Robin," went on the armorer.

"I've heard of nothing but his seven years old, and he looks like his mother, and he's got a jeweled sword and all that sort of thing. I daresay he's a nice little chap. Got American blood in him, you see."

The old man retired to the rear of the shop and called out to some one upstairs. A woman's voice answered.

"My niece will keep shop, sir, while I am out," Spantz explained.

They paused near the door until the old man's niece appeared at the back of the shop. King's glance became more or less in the nature of a stare of amazement.

A young woman of the most astounding beauty, attired in the black and red of the Graustark middle classes, was slowly approaching from the shadowy recesses at the end of the shop. His heart enjoyed a lively thump. Truxton King, you may be sure, did not precede the old man into the street. He deliberately removed his hat and waited most politely for age to go before youth, in the meantime blandly gazing upon the face of this amazing niece.

Across the square, at one of the tables, the old man, over his huge mug of beer, became properly grateful. He was willing to repay King for his lit-

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\$5.00 silk petticoats, black and colors, on special sale \$3.95
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9-4 bleached Pepperell sheeting, worth 28c, 5 yards to a customer, for, per yard, 24c
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42x36 Franconia case, 11c each or per dozen \$1.25
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50c gauze and lace boot style hose on sale for 42c
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\$1.25 fine bleached linen, 72 inches wide, for 98c
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50c bleached mercerized and all linen for 42c
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25c bleached damask, 60 inches wide, for 20c
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In this whole blamed town, your niece, Herr Spantz. I've looked 'em over pretty carefully too. She is exceedingly attract—

"You will not find the beautiful women of Edelweiss in the streets, sir," snapped Spantz.

"Don't they ever go out shopping?"

"Hardly. The merchants, if you will but notice, carry their wares to the houses of the noble and the rich. But tomorrow the garrison at the fortress marches in review before the prince. If you should happen to be on the avenue near the castle gate at 12 o'clock you will see the beauty and chivalry of Graustark. The soldiers are not the only ones who are on parade."

There was an unmistakable sneer in his tone.

"You don't care much for society, I'd say," observed Truxton, with a smile.

Spantz's eyes flamed for an instant and then subtly resumed their most ingratiating twinkle. "We cannot all be peacocks," he said quietly. "You will also see that the man who rides beside the prince's carriage wheel is an American, while Graustark nobles take less exalted places."

"An American, eh?"

"Yes. Have you not heard of John Tullis, the prince's friend? He, your countryman, is the real power behind our throne. On his deathbed the prince's father placed his son in this American's charge and begged him to stand by him through thick and thin until the lad is able to take care of himself. As if there were not loyal men in Graustark who might have done as much for their prince?"

King looked interested. "I see. The people, no doubt, resent this espionage. Is that it?"

Spantz gave him a withering look, as much as to say that he was a fool to ask such a question in a place so public. Without replying, he got to his feet.

"I must return. I have been away too long."

The American sank back in his chair. Suddenly he became conscious of a disquieting feeling that some one was looking at him intently from behind. He turned in his chair and found himself meeting the gaze of a ferocious looking, military appearing little man at a table near by. His waiter appeared at his elbow with the change.

"Who the devil is that old man at the table there?" demanded young Mr. King loudly.

The waiter assumed a look of extreme insolence. "That is Baron Dangloss, minister of police. Anything more, sir?"

"Yes. What's he looking so hard at me for? Does he think I'm a pick-pocket?"

"You know as much as I, sir," was all that the waiter said in reply. King pocketed the coin he had intended for the fellow and deliberately left the place. As he sauntered across the little square his gaze suddenly shifted to a second story window above the gun-

shop. The interesting young woman had cautiously pushed open one of the shutters and was peering down upon a trio of red coated guardsmen. Almost at the same instant her quick, eager gaze fell upon the tall American, now quite close to the horsemen. He saw her dark eyes expand as if with surprise. The next instant he caught his breath and almost stopped in his tracks.

A shy, impulsive smile played about her red lips for a second, lighting up the delicate face with a radiance that amazed him. Then the shutter was closed gently, quickly. He felt his ears burn as he abruptly turned away.

In the meantime Baron Dangloss was watching him covertly from the edge of the cafe garden across the square.

(To Be Continued.)

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